



Chairman Lavin and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jerry Davis. I represent the Montana Bowhunters Association in this testimony.

MBA stands in support of HB 304. MBA's mission is to preserve and promote bowhunting opportunities. This bill supports our mission.

This bill addresses the practice of intentionally blocking county roads to prevent access to public lands, a practice that violates Montana statutes. Presently the penalty for blocking county roads is only \$10 per day. This minor penalty is clearly not enough of a disincentive for those who wish to illegally block county roads.

Additionally the existing penalty is not in alignment with the financial impacts associated with blocking county roads to public lands. Often when a hunter encounters a roadblock it is while in route to a hunting area. When this occurs the hunter's day is often ruined. Now the hunter may be required to expend much more fuel, time, and energy to access other locations or the hunter may simply decide not to hunt.

There can also be financial impacts to communities that cater to hunters who have historically used public lands that are accessible only by a county road. Once the word gets out that an area is blocked off hunter numbers to the communities also will drop off thereby impacting the local economy.

It seems only fair that if an individual choses to break the law and block off a county road, and that individual is found to have encroached on that county road they should be required to pay a penalty that is in alignment with financial impacts. Hopefully a larger penalty will inhibit them from doing it again.

For this reason MBA urges you to vote "do pass" to HB 304.

Thank you,

Jerry Davis

Montana Bowhunters Association